

# Three Creeks Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary



*Three Creeks Conservation Area*

Missouri Department of Conservation  
May 2016



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is seeking public input as we develop and revise conservation area management plans.
- Three Creeks Conservation Area is a 1,500 acre area in Boone County halfway between Columbia and Ashland. It is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Conservation areas support the Department's mission by offering places to restore and conserve fish, forest and wildlife resources, and providing opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Conservation areas are different from state or local parks that may place a greater emphasis on team sports, recreational activities or social gatherings.
- MDC conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (March 1-31, 2016) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 15-year management plan for Three Creeks Conservation Area.
- During this time period, we received comments from 33 respondents.
- Common themes heard during this idea gathering stage included concern with invasive plants, suggestions for repairing, reopening, and expanding trails, suggestions for better marking property boundaries, and appreciation for this area to horseback ride, hike, hunt, trail run, and watch wildlife.
- The Three Creeks planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 15-year area management plan. The draft plan will be available online (likely winter 2017) for a month-long comment period at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans).

## INTRODUCTION

### **Public Comment on Conservation Area Management Plans**

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. MDC is in the multi-year process of updating management plans for conservation areas and invites public comments. To preview draft management plans and share comments online, visit [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans).

MDC conservation areas cover almost 1 million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Most Missourians are within a 30-minute drive of an MDC conservation area.

Missourians care about conservation and use conservation areas for many different reasons. These areas help people discover nature through various activities, and help make Missouri a great place to hunt, fish and enjoy other outdoor activities. We want to know how conservation areas are important to Missourians. Encouraging public comments on Conservation Area Management Plans is part of MDC's ongoing efforts of working for and with Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish and wildlife.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the Wildlife Code of Missouri. MDC will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and statewide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.

Questions? Please contact MDC Public Involvement Coordinator Amy Buechler at 573-522-4115 x3252, or [amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov).

## **Three Creeks Conservation Area**

This 1,500-acre area located between Columbia and Ashland features three permanent streams, primitive camping, multiple use trails (hiking, biking, and horseback riding), and hunting opportunities.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (March 1-31, 2016) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 15-year management plan for Three Creeks Conservation Area. The plan, once drafted, will be posted online ([mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans)) for further public comment.

## **Public Involvement**

The idea gathering phase for development of the Three Creeks Conservation Area Management Plan ran from March 1-31, 2016. The objective of this phase was to inform stakeholders about the area planning process and ask them to share their ideas. To communicate about this comment period, staff:

- posted online comment form available at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans);
- sent news release to local media outlets in early March and posted to Missouri Department of Conservation Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- sent announcement to area plan email list (5,000+ recipients);
- posted notices on bulletin boards in and around Three Creeks Conservation Area; and,
- conducted personal visits or sent email to neighboring landowners.

## **Next steps**

The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 15-year management plan for Three Creeks Conservation Area. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely winter 2017) for a month-long comment period at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans). After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

## DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

### Who responded?

From March 1-31, 2016, we received comments from 33 respondents for the Three Creeks Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage.

Table 1. Total number of respondents commenting during the idea gathering phase (March 1-31<sup>st</sup>, 2016) by respondent category\*

<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
<b>Individual citizens</b> (no affiliation listed)	30
<b>Horseback riding organizations</b> (National Equestrian Trails Coalition, Back Country Horsemen, North American Trail Ride conference, American Endurance Ride Conference)	2
<b>Non-governmental Organizations</b> (Greater Ozarks Audubon Society, Boonslick Master Naturalist, The Nature Conservancy, Center for Biological Diversity)	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33**</b>

\*Respondent categories were self-identified by commenter. Comments do not necessarily reflect the official views of these organizations.

\*\*Some respondents listed affiliation with multiple organization types; the total listed is the total number of respondents, not the sum of that column.

### How they responded

Table 2. Total number of each response type received

<b>Response Type</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Web Comment Form	23
Hard Copy Comment Form	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33</b>

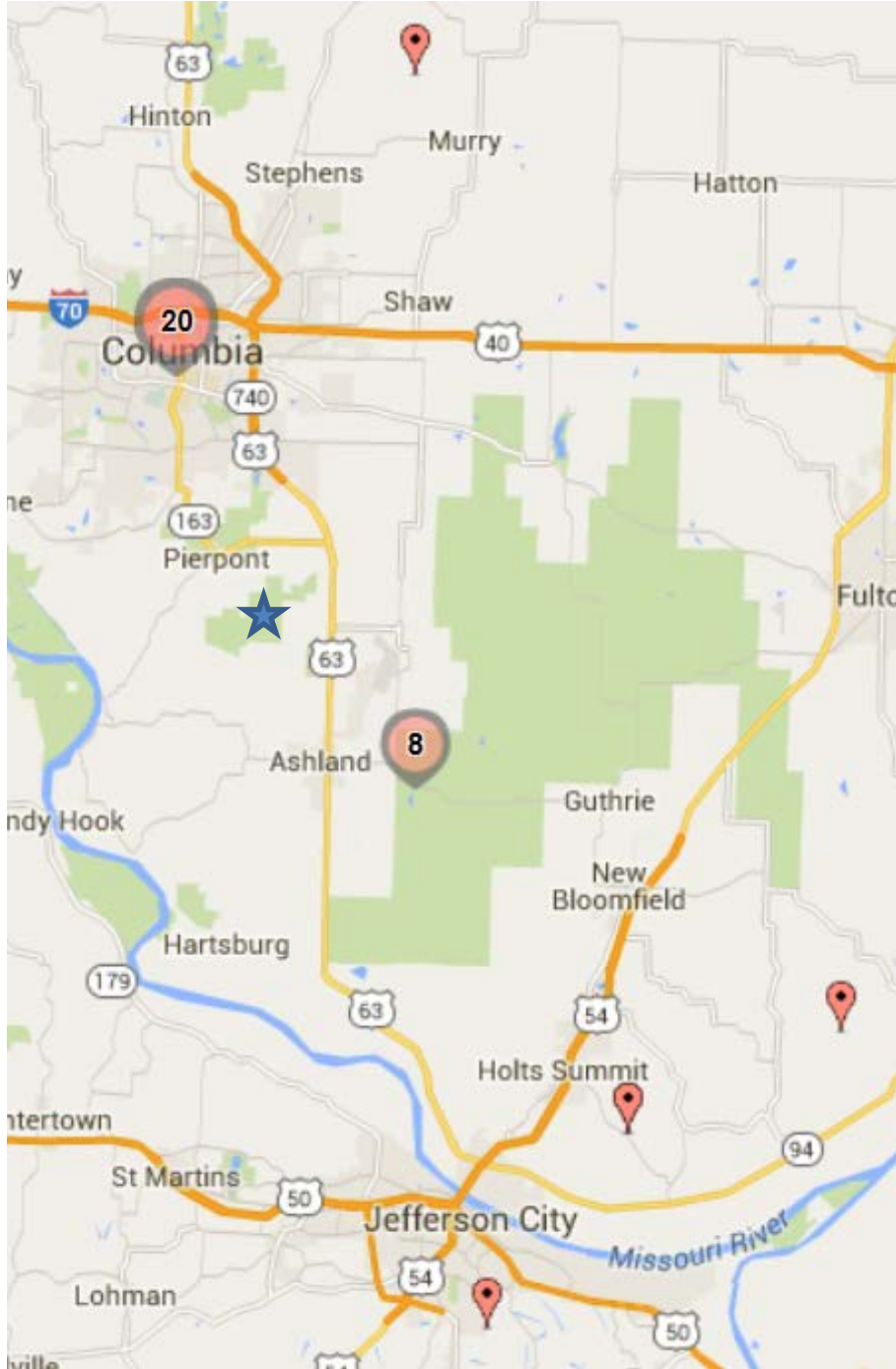
### Where respondents are from

Table 3. Total number of responses categorized by each respondent's location

<b>State</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Missouri	33	100%

**Map of all respondent locations by ZIP code.** ★ = Three Creeks Conservation Area

The pinpoints below represent the central point of ZIP codes from which a public comment was received (they do not represent actual street addresses). Shaded circles with numbers show multiple responses from a geographic area.



## **THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH THREE CREEKS CONSERVATION AREA IDEA GATHERING PHASE (MARCH 1-31, 2016)**

The Three Creeks Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage was available for a public idea gathering period March 1-31, 2016. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 33 respondents. A brief summary of public input themes can be found below. The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 15-year management plan for Three Creeks Conservation Area. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely winter 2017) for a month-long comment period at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans). After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

### Terrestrial Resource Management

- Concern with invasive plant species on area (autumn olive and bush honeysuckle). Supports invasive species removal. Suggests organizing volunteers to help eliminate invasive species.
- Concern with amount of cedar trees taking over east side of property. Suggests removing cedars.
- Suggests managing timber. Concerned that forests are not being managed.
- Suggests managing area as an “urban forest” and “wild area.” Suggests no timber harvesting.
- Suggests continuing native species restoration (wildflowers, warm season grasses, etc.).
- Suggests managing more of area for dove hunting. Suggests managing Three Creeks CA for rabbit hunting and other small-game hunting. Suggests managing for and stocking quail.

### Public Use Management

#### *Trails*

- Suggests reopening trails that have been closed. Suggests expanding amount of trails open for horseback riding.
- Concern with condition of trails. Suggests repairing trails. Southern portions of multi-use trail need rerouted. Offers volunteer assistance to help repair trails.
- Concerned that horseback riders and bikers are using the Turkey Creek Interpretive Nature Trail. Suggests better fencing/entryways to prevent this use.
- Suggests closing trails to horseback riding and biking if trails are too wet.
- Suggests separate trails for horseback riders and hikers.
- Suggests better trail markers from Tomlin Hill Road.
- Suggests creating two multi-use trail loops; only one would be open each year; the other would be undergoing repairs.
- Concerned with signs of horses in creek crossings.

- Supports redesigning interpretive trail markers.
- Suggests adding single track trails for biking and hiking only.
- Suggests not allowing horseback riding at Three Creeks CA.
- Suggests managing/mowing trails during summer.
- Suggests updating area map to include all trails. Seems like not all trails are on the map. Suggests adding landmarks to area map. Suggests stating what uses are allowed on multi-use trails on the area map.
- Suggests adding a trail connection to Rock Bridge State Park horseback riding trails.

#### *Amenities*

- Suggests adding a privy and/or water spigot at the interpretive trail parking trail.
- Opposes adding picnic tables, privies, or anything that would attract more people.
- Suggests adding more parking for horse trailers.

#### *Hunting*

- Concerned that turkey hunting is not allowed on south side of conservation area.

#### *Camping*

- Unsure where camping is allowed.

#### *Education/Interpretation/Signs*

- Suggests providing a brochure or display about area geology, history, and future management plans.
- Suggests posting information about water quality on the area. Are the creeks safe for kids to explore?
- Suggests including caves on the area map and signage to indicate if caves are open to explore.

#### *Enforcement*

- Concerned about never seeing conservation agents patrolling area.
- Concerned with late night parties on area.

#### Administrative Considerations

- Suggests better marking property boundaries.
- Suggests combining Three Creeks CA with Rock Bridge State Park.
- Suggests acquiring ridge above Hunter's Cave.
- Enjoys this area for horseback riding, hiking, biking, hunting, camping, trail running, and watching wildlife.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Three Creeks Idea Gathering Stage Flier



#### **How are conservation areas important to you?**

The Missouri Department of Conservation is updating management plans for our almost 1,000 conservation areas and we want your comments.

#### **Three Creeks Conservation Area**

Staff at the Three Creeks Conservation Area are beginning to develop an area management plan for the next 15 years. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management of Three Creeks!

This spring, we are working to gather ideas to help inform us when developing our draft area management plan. The DRAFT Three Creeks Area Management Plan will be available for an additional public comment period in coming months.

#### **Comment period closes**

March 31, 2016



Take a look at management plans and share your comments online at **[mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans)**, or get a copy of plans and comment forms at your local MDC office.

## Appendix 2. Three Creeks Idea Gathering Stage Press Release



### MDC seeks input on management of Three Creeks Conservation Area

*Public comment period runs through March 31.*

**COLUMBIA, Mo.**— The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. Currently, the Department requests input on Three Creeks Conservation Area in Boone County.

MDC invites the public to provide comments about the area to aid staff in developing a 10-year management plan for the property. Interested persons or groups— including recreational users, neighboring landowners, conservation groups, elected officials and government agencies—can share ideas online from March 1-31 at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans).

“Missourians care about conservation and use conservation areas for many different reasons,” said MDC Director Bob Ziehmer. “These areas help people discover nature through various activities and help make Missouri a great place to hunt, fish and enjoy outdoor activities. We want to know how conservation areas are important to Missourians. Encouraging public comments on Conservation Area Management Plans is part of MDC’s ongoing efforts of working for and with Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish and wildlife.”

MDC staff will review comments as they develop a draft management plan for Three Creeks Conservation Area. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property’s purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and statewide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.

Upon completion of a draft management plan, MDC will post it online at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans) for additional public comment. After considering all public comments, the final plan will be drafted, approved, and posted online.

Three Creeks Conservation Area occupies 1501 acres just south of Columbia off of Highway 63. Visitors can explore the rugged forest featuring scenic bluffs, intermittent streams, geologic formations, and old eastern red cedar trees. Three creeks flow into each other within the conservation area: Turkey Creek, Bass Creek, and Bonne Femme Creek. Additionally, the area offers bird watching, bicycling, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, outdoor photography, and wildlife viewing for all Missourians to enjoy.

Three Creeks Conservation Area is open for public use daily, from 4 a.m. -- 10 p.m., except for authorized camping, fishing, and hunting activities.



MDC invites public input on management of Three Creeks Conservation Area. Open public comment period runs through March 31.

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

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Media Specialist

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### Appendix 3. Three Creeks Idea Gathering Stage Hard Copy Comment Form

# SHARE YOUR Comments

## How is Three Creeks Conservation Area important to you?

### Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about the Three Creeks Area Plan.

☐ Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about other conservation area plans.

Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your ideas

Staff at Three Creeks Conservation Area are beginning to develop an area management plan for the next 15 years. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management of Three Creeks Conservation Area!

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(Continued on back)

[illegible]

**Thank you for your comments!** We hope to hear from a broad range of public interests and will listen and consider all ideas. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into the conservation area plan and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, available financial and staffing resources, the best role of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of Department staff.

**Mail to:** Amy Buechler, MDC, Policy Coordination, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102 (postmark by March 31). You can also comment online at [mdc.mo.gov/areaplans](http://mdc.mo.gov/areaplans). Comment period closes March 31, 2016.

**Appendix 4. Comments received during Three Creeks Conservation Area Idea Gathering Phase (March 1-31, 2016).**

This is a lovely area to ride horses, hike and watch wildlife. I am highly disappointed in the steady decline of this CA. This area for years was in wonderful condition and it is sickening how the conservation department has steadily let it decline. Please in the new plan take resources to fix the trails back and open those that have been closed. This area no longer offers trail riders enough trails to make it worth their while to haul there.

This area is an underutilized birding area. We use 3 creeks for ornithology field trips at MU as well as other birding groups. I would love to see better trail development and maintenance as well as trails specifically for horses and others designated for hiking only. It is common to see horse tracks and manure in the creek crossings. The interpretive trail is a good idea and I would love to see it brought back as most of the trail markers are completely gone.

Please mark the trail with a color marker from Thomlin Road.

We really enjoy the interpretive trail with our kids age 2-6. It's a good path and high interest for them to look for the letters and identify the objects with the letter. It's also a nice length to do part of on an afternoon.

It would be nice to have a bathroom at the parking lot, or a spigot.

It would be nice to have a display or a brochure that explains the area's geology or history or plan for the future.

Please offer a map that includes the caves and a specific sign if we are free to explore or when cave is closed.

Please mark landowners property better on borders that are on streams - I think we have been off MDC land in past without realizing.

If at all possible, would be nice to have some trail management in summer in low lying areas near creek- grass is taller than our family in some places!

Please update maps to reflect where trails are - the interpretive trail map seems like it's missing some of the trails we have found.

It would be also be nice to know the water quality of the area - if there was a posting somewhere to see how healthy stream is, or really, in any stream area of MDC. It would be good to know water quality before we let kids play!

the southern loop of the trail that connects the north end of the park to the south end of the park has been lost for some years now due to trail erosion. this should be fixed.

as I understand it this isn't possible because it would require the trail to be moved onto private land.

perhaps the land owner would grant an easement if asked nicely, or, a small bridge over the creek and back could bypass the eroded area.

it's a bummer this is taking years to sort out, ^ used to ride that trail frequently.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Three Creeks. Three Creeks, along with Dry Fork at Guthrie, are two of the best places to ride our horses, hike our trails, be out in nature and all its beauty. Unfortunately a few years back we had a pretty good size flood at Three Creeks and there was a lot of damage done from the debris backed up one of the creeks, to trail erosion. The trails were basically cut in half. I would LOVE to see Three Creeks returned to the way it was with nice trails open to hiking, trail riding, bicycling, bird watching and the list goes on. It seems We The People are being asked to give up more and more of our Public Lands to recreate on. I would like to offer up the National Equestrian Trails Coalition as a resource to tap into some Recreational Trails Funding and rally some volunteers to help fix up and repair the damage done to Three Creeks. If I can be of service to you, please contact me at \*\*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*.com or by phone at \*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*. Thank You.

I visit this area 2-3 times a week year round. It is a wonderful place to run my dog, ride my horse, hike with family, and I've hunted doves, crows, and squirrels here. I would like to see better marked trails- i.e. Down at the fork where Tomlin Hill trail meets Deer Park trail near the swimming hole- post a sign indicating which trailhead is which way, how many miles away. Also some intermittent trail signs indicating mileage. A trail marker on the creekbed trail leading up to Minor Hill Road would be great as well. Second, the trail maps as they are now are not very accurate in mileage and lack landmarks to help figure out where you are! Finally, I'd love to see more of the area managed for dove hunting. Unless you've got access to private land, Three Creeks is one of just a few areas local to Columbia (Eagle Bluffs is the only other close CA, with Diana Bend and Franklin Island nearly 45 mins away and both dwindling in dove managed land) which is managed for doves and it becomes close quarters for eager hunters during early dove season.

I would ask that this area continue to be maintained for a place with horse trails and parking for trucks/trailers that transport our animals. this is one of a few areas conducive to trail riding.

More open trails for horses please.

Get rid of the horse riding in 3 Creeks. The horses stink, cause erosion of trails, and bully the hikers. I would like to see numbers of hikers vs. horses. I bet the hikers outnumber horseback riders by 10 to 1. Also a number of riders enter the park illegally via private property and then use the hikers trail to access the rest of the park. Cedar trees are taken over the Eastern part adjacent to 3 Creeks Farms Subdivision. I've never seen anyone from MDC patrolling the area. 3 Creeks needs to be better managed or incorporated into Rock Bridge Memorial State Park.

I used to use Three Creeks for rabbit hunting, but have not been there for nearly 20 years as the rabbit hunting became poor. I would like to see parts of Three Creeks managed for small game production and hunting. Thank you.

Dear Friends,

We have lived next to the Deer Park Road Access to Three Creeks Conservation Area for 10 years. It is our opinion that that this Area is well managed by the Professional Foresters and staff at MDC.

Our interests are:

- #1 Hiking
- #2 Wildlife observation
- #3 Boy Scout LEAVE NO TRACE backpack camping
- #4 Hunting

Our biggest concern for Three Creeks is the control of noxious invasive plant species like Autumn Olive and Bush Honeysuckles.

Our second concern is trail damage and erosion by horse traffic. We have many friends and neighbors who enjoy trail riding. We don't want to eliminate access for our trail riding friends but wonder what might be done to reduce trail damage by horses. (We know that is a difficult management problem.)

We might recommend projects to continue and expand the restoration of Native Species like the Warm Season Grasses along the Deer Park Road entrance and Native Wildflowers along some of the trails.

Thank you for your good work!

(Hardcopy comment received 3/8/2016):What is an "Area Management" plan?

We have lived at our location for 48 years. When we built our home no one lived south of us. Grass grew up between the paths on the road which is now Tomlin Hill Rd. When anyone came past our house they were either site-seers or lost. Our Ideas- because of our proximity to Three Creeks is different than those of people who may drive here and park in the parking area. Our view is one of "our home" and not a place to walk, hear a dog, or have an outing. Consequently we would rather and hopefully see the area stay like it is. It's one of those last places - (unlike Rock Bridge Park) that has remained "untouched" and wild. We hear bobcats in the spring - (mating season) howling - see lots of deer, fox, coyotes, rabbits, opossum, raccoons, squirrels, and hawks, and buzzards etc, in their over flow of the 3 creeks area. We are grateful for that. We

would hate to see so many people in the area that would wildlife is forced out. As homes have been built south of us - closer to 3 creeks we pray the wild life would stay. Turkey have left, since we've lived here 0 they used to frequent our pasture - but no longer. So, the "wild" environment of the 3 creeks area attracts and provides for those local creatures - please don't populate the area with people with picnic benches, toilets, wide travel ways with gravel etc - leave nature to take care of itself where you can. We understand dead tree removal and underbrush removal - poison and "kudza" grass removal as well as other noxious weeds. Thank you for the opportunity to give our opinion on this matter

I used to hunt turkeys on the south side of the conservation area many years ago. I was disappointed when you put it off limits. I think you should consider opening it up for spring turkey hunting. You open it for deer hunting.

(Hardcopy Comment: (3/16/2016) Keep up the good work and keep trails open to horses. Also, please figure out a way to keep the late night parties to a minimum.

It is a wonderful park that we use frequently. However, the equestrians have taken the place over and ruined the trails for mountain biking and even hiking in some places. There should be additional separation of the trails and restrictions on equestrians. Also something similar to what is done at Rockbridge where trails are closed to mountain biking after rains if biking would damaged the trails should be implement and trails would be closed to both biking and equestrians after a rain if trails would be damaged by use.

If possible, the hogback above the Hunter's cave on the east side of the park should be purchased. Also, it would good if the cedars that have taken over what remained of the prairie on the east side of the park just west of the Three Creeks subdivision should be removed.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the management of the park.

Increase horse trails, let riders access more trails as they have had in the past. It is one of the few conservation areas with horse trails, but with the increase in popularity of trail riding, Three Creeks needs to reopen closed trails and make more trails accessible for horseback riders. It contains many of Missouri's most beautiful natural land structures, which should continue to been seen by horseback.

More horse trails!

We horseback ride and hike at 3 Creeks several times a month and really enjoy the park. I think management has been excellent thus far.

I would like to see more parking for horse trailers and the horse trails better maintained. I also would like to see the trails open for a longer period of time. Most horse people are sensible and respectful not to ride public trails when weather is inclement. We ride year round and that area is one of our favorites to ride because of the closeness to our home. We ride sensibly and safely, and would love to see that area when the snow is on.

Just my thoughts and opinions. Thanks.

I love this trail for both horseback riding and trail running. I would love to see some kind of connection to the Rockbridge trailhead without having to cross the busy street on horseback. Also more trails cut into the already existing ones.

Needs to remain a multi-use trail including use by horses.

Continue the multi-use trails, if possible open up the 2 equestrian trails that have been closed within the last few years. One Trail that was closed is on the upper area near the Quail management area. It started off of the horse trail to the right and looped down to a creek and then back up to the trail. The other trail was the one that went through the Creek bottom, past the big cave and then connected back to the the horse trail to the right of the creek confluence. I have no concerns about the hiking trail being closed to horses. It gives trail users an area to hike without concerns about coming across the trail riders, knowing full well some trail users are apprehensive about horses. The trails are well maintained and I use this area at least once a month unless the trail condition is wet.

My predominate use for this property is horseback riding, although I hike it a fair amount of time. To ease the deterioration of the trails from horse and bike use, I would propose the development of two loops for this use. Have them open alternating years so repair could be made. I love the fact that I can ride a circle on this trail and I do not have to back track on my route. I also appreciate the scenic views as well as the flat options available to ride.

We use Three Creeks for horseback riding several times a week through spring, summer, and fall. We often take other kids who don't have the privilege of riding horses or getting out into nature often. We often make a small fire along the trail and enjoy hotdogs and saddle bag ice cream while the kids explore the creeks.

We would love to see the closed trails reopened and would be more than happy to help establish/maintain it again.

this is a high use area in a rapidly expanding population situation. Manage with an eye to protecting the ecology from the impacts of the ever increasing usage, to the extent possible. It's destiny is as an urban forest.

It is very sad we have so few quail left in the state. I would like to see quail habitat and stocking.

Manage as a "urban forest" (due to proximity to an urban area). Consider designating as a "wild area", according to MDC guidelines.

Preserve and focus on natural areas/resources and habitat. No timber harvesting, no paved trails. Allow hunting only for control of species that might damage natural resources (such as an over-abundance of deer).

My family and I use Three Creeks Conservation frequently. We go on family hikes, bike rides and trail runs for a combined estimate of 50 times a year. The Conservation Department does a

great job of keeping the trails marked and clear. The multiple connecting loops including the Turkey Creek trail allow for flexible hike lengths.

I would very much like to know why MDC closed the main loop in the area. It has been a real disappointment to not have access to a multiple-mile loop. Nearly all users would prefer a loop to an out-and-back trail. I have reached out to the department a couple of times inquiring why the loop was not reopened. Unfortunately I have never received a response to my inquiry.

A couple of specific comments for consideration:

1. Mixed use (hike, bike, horse) trails can be confusing. Greater clarity for use both on maps and trails would help area users better comply with rules. This is a safety issue as well. Horses and bikes on the same trail can be hazardous, particularly if the two are not expecting an encounter.
2. Longer loops are needed. Since the main loop has been closed the past several years there is no loop on the main trail. This makes for less enjoyable use of the space. In fact a huge chunk of the park is not being utilized, partially due to the lack of a loop.
3. It would be nice to have additional single-track trails. In my experience those areas tend to be utilized only for hikers and the occasional biker. Single tracks can be more technically challenging. This would give the area additional diversity in use based upon skill level.
4. Camping seems to be somewhat haphazard. The occasional campers seem mainly to use about ten sites. But it seems a little unclear whether or where camping is allowed in the area. I don't know if best practices call for specifically designated camping spots or random use.

All for managing timber-high time

Horseback riders trespassing but not a big deal - many problems not as bad as in past.

Use the area to its fullest - likes to see area users.

More fencing and entryways need to be added to exclude horses and bicyclists from the Turkey Creek Interpretive Nature Trail. Signage is not enough. Everytime during 10+ years that I used the trail in spring through fall, there was ongoing or evidence of unpermitted use by horses and bicyclists. I have not used the area since 2014 because of horse manure and associated insects on the interpretive trail.

For the convenience and safety of other users, I recommend consideration of a parking area(s) specifically for horse trailers.

In the past, this was one of my favorite areas to hike. I still go there several times in a year, but it really detracts from the experience to see it taken over by bush honeysuckle and autumn olive, as many areas within the Three Creeks have been. Please devote resources to vanquishing these pests.

The Turkey Creek Interpretive Trail is supposed to be for hikers only, but I regularly see evidence that it has been used by horses. Some control of this would be good.

I really enjoy this Conservation Area and generally I think MDC has done a good job juggling the multiple uses of the area. However, the use of the area by horses during wetter periods is causing a lot of erosion of the trails. A better management plan is needed for horse use to limit them being on certain trails in wetter times. Also, I believe you need to organize with volunteers like the state parks do to start eliminating the invasive species of plants that are starting to take over the area. I have helped on a number of these in state parks and volunteers can make a substantial dent in the proliferation of exotics. Thanks for giving us a chance to contribute to your management plan.

Work to control invasive honeysuckle and autumn olive.

Protect hiker-only trails from horse use.

Increase protections in park as Boone County population and park users increase as well as development pressure at boundaries.

Thank you!